

# COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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" Were the countries, which have usually supplied us, in a state of independence and security, the prospect would be far from pleasing; but when we cast an anxious eye to the Baltic, the view becomes dreary indeed. Who can contemplate the consequences of a short crop, a mildew, or a wet harvest without horror?"—POLITICAL REGISTER.

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## SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

CORN AGAINST SUGAR (continued from page 648).—When I wrote the article, here referred to, which was on Wednesday last, I had not seen any of the advertisements, which I have since seen, for meetings in several of the counties to agree upon petitions against the bill, which is about to be brought into parliament for the purpose of causing *Sugar* to be used in the distilleries instead of *Corn*. It was not till after my Register was gone to the press that I saw any of these advertisements; and, as I could easily perceive, that, against the effect of publications, flowing through so many channels, and at a rate so rapid, the Register would stand no chance of success, I thought it would be useful to write an address to the Freeholders of Hampshire upon the subject, which I did on Friday, and which address, as it applied to every part of the country, I caused to be inserted in as many newspapers as I could, giving it a fair chance against the advertisements and paragraphs, which those newspapers were circulating upon the other side of the question.—This Address I shall now insert here, and shall then submit to the reader such additional observations as appear to me likely to assist in the removing of that mist of error, whence the alarm of the land-owners and tithe-owners, and farmers seem to have proceeded.

### TO THE FREEHOLDERS OF HAMPSHIRE.

" GENTLEMEN,—As one of yourselves, I take the liberty to address you upon the subject of a bill intended to be shortly brought before parliament, the object of which is, to cause SUGAR to be used in the Distilleries of England and Scotland, instead of the CORN which is now therein used.—For many months past, gentlemen, there has existed a general alarm at the shutting of the foreign corn-ports. The argument has been this: we have long been in the habit of importing annually a large quantity of corn; this importation was necessary, otherwise it would not have been made; and the enemy having succeeded in closing the ports of the

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Baltic against us, at the same time that the unjust and insolent demands of America leave us no ground whereon to depend upon a supply of corn from that country, it is evident, that, unless we can, in some way or other, add to the quantity of corn produced at home, we must, in proportion to the quantity of corn now imported, experience additional distress, if a year of scarcity should unhappily arrive. The truth of this conclusion every man admits, and the nation, with voice unanimous, exclaim, Let us, as we love our lives and hate the yoke of a conqueror, add to the quantity of the corn produced at home.—Now, gentlemen, one way of adding, in effect, to the quantity of any thing, is, to obtain some other thing capable of being made use of in its stead. Thus, if a man's turnips run short, he gives some cabbages to his cattle, and does thereby, in fact, add to his quantity of turnips. Upon this plain principle the king's ministers have the intention of bringing forward the bill above described; and, it must, I should think, be evident to every man, that, if we bring sugar from our colonies to supply the place of the corn now used in the distilleries, there will be in the country so much more corn to be used in the way of food, which is the very effect that we are all so anxious to see produced, and to produce which effect the situation of our colonies and our commerce is, at this moment, acknowledged, on all hands, to be peculiarly favourable.—Evident, however, as these truths appear to me, and, as I think they will appear to you, a great clamour has, by some of the land-owners and corn-dealers, been raised against the intended bill; the alarm of these gentlemen having, all of a sudden, changed its nature; from a dread of a *scarcity* of corn, they have, in the twinkling of an eye, fallen into a dread of too great a *plenty* of corn; and some of them assert, that, if the intended bill should become a law, the *farmers* will become bankrupts, because, having lost one of the markets for their corn, their corn *will fall in price*, and they will not be able to pay their rents.—Gentlemen, any thing more groundless than this alarm, more unsound

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than this reasoning, I do not remember to have met with in the course of my life. What! is *plenty* the farmer's ruin? Is *abundance* to be a source of national danger? Is *cheapness* of corn the people's curse? The farmer has poor-rates to pay as well as rent; and, you all well know, gentlemen, that he has more to pay in poor-rates when corn is dear than when corn is cheap; you know, in fact, that the amount of his poor-rates keeps in exact proportion to the price of corn; you know, also, that what is not given in times of scarcity to the labourer in increased poor-rates must be given him in increased wages; you know further, that, if the farmer sells his corn cheap, he fatts his hogs cheap, he feeds his horses and cattle cheap, he keeps his servants cheap; and, indeed, you, who are farmers, well know, from bitter experience, that the greatest evil of your lives were the high prices of the years 1800 and 1801, an evil which you feel to this hour, and which you will feel for many years yet to come.—But, gentlemen, I beg you to consider the sweeping tendency of the principle, upon which the intended bill is objected to, which principle applies to all cases wherein an increase in the produce of corn takes place. According to this principle, *to improve the land already enclosed is an evil*, because such improvement will certainly add to the produce of the land; that increased produce will as certainly lower the price of corn (unless more mouths are found to eat it); to lower the price of corn is, according to the opposers of this bill, to ruin the farmer; and, therefore, if we admit this principle, to improve the land already enclosed is an evil. And, gentlemen, what shall, then, be said, of *new enclosures*? It is the general opinion, that new enclosures cause an addition to the quantity of corn produced; it is the opinion of many of those who oppose the bill, that the way to prevent scarcity in England and Scotland is to bring large tracts of waste lands into cultivation, because, they say, that the quantity of corn produced would thereby be made greater than it now is. Supposing this to be the case (and that no new mouths are created to eat such addition to the produce) the price of corn will certainly be lowered by the new enclosures; the lowering of the price of corn will here again, according to the opposers of the bill, ruin the farmer; and, therefore, upon their principle, those new enclosures, which they themselves represent as being necessary to the salvation of the country, would be a great national evil. The light, however, in which the inconsistency of these gentlemen's conduct appears the most

clearly, is this, that, for a long series of years they have seen corn brought into England and Scotland from foreign countries, without having, in any one instance, complained against it, as likely to ruin the farmers. Now there is no foreign country that can send us any corn; but our lands in the West Indies are able to send us sugar that will supply the place of the corn that we used to get from foreign countries; and, observe, that we buy this sugar of our own countrymen, and pay them in flax and wool and iron and tin and copper, all the natural produce of our own soil, while the corn which we drew from foreign countries was, for the greater part, paid for in gold and silver; and yet, Gentlemen, strange it is to say, that the persons who oppose the intended Bill, who call themselves the friends of the farmers, who quietly suffered *eight hundred thousand* quarters of corn to be brought every year from foreign countries, would now fain persuade those same farmers, that they will be ruined by the bringing in of that which will supply the place of, at most, *three hundred thousand* quarters of corn, that being the full amount of what is used yearly in the distilleries. Nay, gentlemen, these same persons have no scruple to express their sorrow that the supply of foreign corn is cut off by the enemy, and their wishes that that supply may be again renewed; just as if 800,000 quarters of corn, brought from abroad, would not lower the price of our corn produced at home more than 300,000 thrown back from the distilleries; and yet, gentlemen, the opposers of the intended Bill call themselves the friends of the farmer. There may be some farmers so easily misled, so completely blinded, as to believe this, and may carry their folly so far as to be induced to join in a petition to parliament against a bill which they are told will make corn cheap; but, I trust that the farmers of Hampshire have too much good sense to be so deceived; and that, at any rate, if the petition, which is talked of, should be seriously proposed, we, the freeholders in general, shall not be so shamefully deficient in the duty we owe to ourselves, to the poor, and to our country, as to suffer it to be carried, without such an opposition on our part as shall convince the parliament, that it speaks not the sense of the county.—I am, &c. &c."

It was not until after this letter was written, that I was informed, that Mr. ARTHUR YOUNG was one of the persons, who had been examined by the committee that reported in favour of the intended bill, and that he expressed his decided opinion against the suffering of sugar to be made use of in

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distilleries. MR. WAKEFIELD, I understood, was also examined before the committee, and gave his opinion on the same subject.—The readers of the Register will collect, that my columns have, of late, been a good deal devoted to Mr. Young. To both these gentlemen, indeed; but, first to Mr. Young. I had given it as my opinion, that England (meaning the whole of the kingdom) might exist, in safety and greatness, *independent of commerce*. Amongst those who were of a different opinion, there were some who maintained, that we were unable to grow corn enough for our own consumption. I replied, that, if commerce ceased, there would be *more hands* to cultivate the land, and *not more mouths* to eat the corn.—Mr. Young, who was the most formidable of my opponents, took great pains to convince me, that, for years to come, we could not raise corn enough to feed ourselves. He showed, that we had been importing for many years last past, to the average amount of 2,000,000 of pounds sterling a year; he insisted, that there was no remedy but that of bringing the waste lands into cultivation by the means of a General Enclosure bill; and, he acknowledged that this must necessarily be a work of time.—In short, this was what he said: importation is now necessary; to put a stop to the necessity of importation you must augment your domestic produce; to augment your domestic produce you must enclose new lands, but this will be a work of time.—Now, as Mr. Young desired to see more corn produced, and an importation, until more corn could be produced, I wonder (for I have not yet seen his evidence) what objection he could possibly have stated against the importation of sugar to supply the place of corn. Mr. Young tells us; indeed he proves to us, that our average import of corn, for the last twenty-six years has amounted to *two millions* sterling; what objection, then, could he have made against the importation of sugar, to supply the place of corn, to the amount of about *half a million* a year? He was alarmed at the shutting of all the foreign corn ports against us; and he is now alarmed, apparently in a greater degree, at the opening of a port in our own colonies for something that will supply the place of part of our corn.—MR. WAKEFIELD (see page 501) took the pains to furnish me with a statement of the importation of corn for many years past. “From 1800 to 1801,” says he, “we have, on an average imported the enormous quantity of 1,447,500 quarters yearly,” of *wheat* only, I believe, he means. Then he proceeds to a description

of the fearful dangers we have to apprehend from the stopping up of the foreign corn-ports: “For the last 40 years,” says he, “we have been exchanging our gold and our silver for subsistence, and now a new order of things has arisen. It is now no longer a question of commercial policy; no longer a matter of profit and loss, whether the past system is to be pursued. However willing we may be to enrich other countries, to vivify the agriculture, and stimulate the industry of other nations, we shall not be permitted to purchase the agricultural produce of the continent. All the corn ports of Europe are closed, and all the wealth of these islands will be unable to purchase a supply of food from the continent. To such observations as I have been addressing you, I have not unfrequently heard it remarked, “wheat is only about 70s. a quarter.” So much the worse on every account: the price is too low to stimulate an increasing and productive tillage; this low price deceives us into a dangerous security. Even suppose it to arise wholly from a bountiful season, and in nothing to result from the present corn laws, still by next August or Sept. it will be all consumed, and then a month’s hard rain, or should mildew blight our crops in one week, what will be our prospect? how general will be the distress and pressure of scarcity? To what country can we look for aid? Upon import from America we cannot depend, even if we continue at peace with the United States. Thus, then, it appears to me, that a due consideration of the subject brings the painful conviction, that *we rely upon foreign import to an alarming and dangerous extent*; that from an export of six hundred thousand quarters of corn annually, we have gradually come to require an import of nearly a million and a half of quarters; that in years of scarcity *we depend upon foreign supply for nearly a fifth of our consumption*, and that in ordinary seasons we depend upon importation for a seventh part of our subsistence.”—Now, what practical purpose could this gentleman possibly have in view, but that of impressing our minds with the persuasion, that we should be in great danger from the cutting off of the foreign supply of corn, and of stimulating us to an increase of our domestic production? And yet, he is now alarmed, he now feels *additional* alarm, because a measure is about to be adopted, that will introduce from our own colonies, annually, about a *fifth part* as much corn, in the shape of sugar, as was be-



fore introduced, from foreign states, in the shape of corn! In my address, above inserted, I took the average annual importation at 800,000 quarters; but, it appears from Mr. Wakefield's statement, that it has been 1,447,500. of *wheat* only, during the last 6 years. Have the farmers been "*ruined*" thereby? Have they found any want of a market? Has not their corn borne a good price? Do they not drink wine? Do not their wives have their parties? Do not their daughters make a villainous noise upon the piano? Well, then, if they have survived and even become luxurious in their living, under this importation of 1,447,500 quarters of corn annually, can Mr. Wakefield really fear that they will be ruined now that 300,000 quarters are to be imported, in the shape of sugar, all the other channels of importation being completely stopped up?—Mr. Wakefield has another letter, which will be found inserted in the present number. When I saw his name at the bottom of it, I expected to meet with some satisfactory explanation upon the principal points of the subject; but, I must confess that I met with nothing but disappointment.—He divides his matter under *three heads*. He considers the proposed bill, 1st, as to the claims which the planter has to its benefits, at the expence of the farmer, upon the score of *right*; 2ndly, as it will affect the *revenue*, in which he apprehends that it will produce a defalcation; 3dly, as it will operate with respect to the *general interests of the nation*. The question of right is of no importance, until we have settled the point, that the bill will be injurious to the farmer, and which point, I think, must be settled in the negative. As to the revenue, if Mr. Wakefield will but suffer the sugar to be distilled, I will venture to answer for the government's taking care that the distillation shall cost enough in the way of taxes. It is, indeed, a subject of serious alarm, that a thousand or two of gallons of gin should reach the lips of hackney-coachmen, unhallowed by the touch of an exciseman's rule. Let Mr. Wakefield look at the body of tax-gatherers that this country supports. Would that Buonaparte could see them all, gentle and simple, noble and plebeian, drawn out upon Salisbury plain (for no other place could exhibit them at one view); for he must be something more than mortal not to be dismayed at the sight. What! when each man of this innumerable host is armed with the power of entering houses, prying into every corner, locking up rooms and vats and furnaces; clapping on

his seal, at the sight of which the owner trembles as if it were the seal of the Holy Inquisition. When this is the case; when every man's neighbour, servant, and child is invited to be a spy upon his actions, as far as relates to the evasion of taxes, is it possible that a man like Mr. Wakefield should object to a measure, upon the ground of its being likely to relax the rigours of taxation? There is one objection coupled with this which, however, is worthy of particular notice. The houses, &c. for distilling corn, Mr. Wakefield says, cost a large sum of money; the trade, as now carried on, requires a large capital; but, that a distillery for sugar will cost, comparatively, nothing; that, therefore, the introduction of sugar will render large capitals useless in the trade, and rivalry will reduce the profits to a bare subsistence. This would be an excellent objection for a *great* distiller to make in his *counting-house*, or in a whisper to his partner; but, I think, he would take special care to disguise it from the public, and more particularly from those who have to legislate for the general good, to whom, supposing them to have even a small share of very common sense, it must be evident, that the smaller the capital required to carry on a trade of any given magnitude, the greater the benefit to the state, in which that trade is carried on; and that, if the trade, which now gives *opulence* to a few, can be made to provide *subsistence* for many, it is, I think, a thing most ardently to be wished.—I now come to Mr. Wakefield's third head, under which I did expect to find something to the point; something in the way of direct answer to what the "*learned*" call the *argumentum ad hominem*, contained in my last Register and in my separate address; something to explain the apparent inconsistency of earnestly recommending an *augmentation of produce* one day, and the very next day expressing alarm at a measure that must, in effect, *augment the produce*; something to explain why no remonstrance was made against the importation of 1,447,500 quarters of corn annually, if the importation of the means of saving 300,000 quarters is to ruin the farmer; something to explain why Messrs. Wakefield and Young were so alarmed at the shutting of the foreign corn ports, if it be true that the importation of what will supply the place of corn ought not, upon any account, to be imported; something to explain why these gentlemen recommended new enclosures as the means of adding to the quantity of our corn, if it be true that the trifling addition of 300,000 quarters a year take away the



to produce corn.—Mr. Wakefield, indeed, at the close of his letter, announce his intention of treating more largely upon the effect of *enclosures* in his letter, which he politely declines doing at present, lest he should occupy too much of your room; for which I thank him; but, certainly should, upon this occasion, have been very glad if he had paid less regard to my convenience. In the mean while, however, and, as it were to stay my longing, he refers me to his sentiments (upon this part of the subject), contained in a *former* letter, which sentiments we will now examine. "Inclosures," says he, "merit particular consideration. If they should be forced upon the farmer, it will augment the evil [the evil of cheap market] of which I am complaining; but if only encouraged by means of facilitating enclosure bills, bringing of the waste lands into cultivation will not proceed faster than the joint prosperity of the farmer and the country will warrant. Inclosures, however, will rather be the effect of prosperity, than its positive parent, though, afterwards they will have the effect of upholding and perpetuating it." Now, though I do not understand this clearly, I may, I think, venture to assume, that Mr. Wakefield would wish to see *something* done in the way of enclosing; and, that he thinks, that enclosing more land would add to the quantity of corn produced. If this be his meaning, then I should be glad to know, why that addition, whatever it might be, would not injure the farmer in the same way that the introduction of sugar, to be used as corn, would injure him. If this be not his meaning; if he does not believe, that an addition to the quantity of enclosed land would make an addition to the corn produced, why enclose *at all*? At any rate, there is an essential difference between Mr. Wakefield and Mr. Young: one is for a very slow process in the way of enclosure, the other for a general law that would set all the adventurers and speculators at work in a moment. What Mr. Wakefield means by forcing enclosures upon the farmer, I really cannot comprehend; and, indeed, the whole of this passage appears to me, to betray evident signs of a want of clear and settled notions, in the mind, whence it proceeded. Mr. Wakefield was (see his letter, page 655, strenuously contending, that the prices of corn were *too low*. He was about to devise means for raising and keeping up the price of corn; but, it occurred to him, as it naturally must, that, as (according to the general supposition, which he appears

to have adopted) new enclosures would increase the quantity of corn already raised, and would, of course, tend to bring the price still lower than it now is, it was necessary to guard against this objection; yet, he did not like to say, that enclosures were mischievous. He, therefore, endeavoured to steer a middle course; and, as it mostly happens in such cases, rendered himself perfectly unintelligible. There was, besides, another difficulty, which Mr. Wakefield fairly gave the go-by, namely, that of *improvement*; for, if, as he contends, the way to make corn *plenty* is to raise and to keep up the price of it; if *plenty* is to be produced only by *dearth* (good lord, what an idea!) then the way to have a superabundance is to put a total stop to dunging and chalking and claying, and to manuring and improving in every way and degree!—In the letter, which I insert in another part of the present Number, Mr. Wakefield notices what was said by me, in the last Register, at page 644. He says, he thanks me for the idea of the corn used in the distilleries and breweries being *thrown away*. He is very welcome to it as far as it is mine; but, he will please to recollect, that I did not say a word about *breweries*, and that the *idea* was, in fact, his own, the *words* only belonging to me. He says, however, that I have imputed to him a meaning not his. Let us see if this be so. He had said, that, in order to provide against a time of scarcity, that is to say, against the evils attending a scanty crop, we must, in common years, produce more corn than we consume in *food*, and that the surplus must be used in distilleries. That is to say, said I, you mean, that a part of the common crop must be bought of the farmer to be *thrown away*; for, as food, it must be thrown away, or it answers the purposes of food when it comes out of the still. I see no "fallacy." And Mr. Wakefield allows, that, as food, the corn used in the distilleries is thrown away. The *farmer*, indeed, receives the value of it; but, that value must come out of the labour of the consumer of the spirituous liquors; and, by the *nation*, the corn is really thrown away, (upon the admission of Mr. Wakefield) who, if consistent, will certainly allow, that the throwing of it into the sea would answer all the purposes full as well. He was driven to this acknowledgement; because I had reminded him, that, if the hot liquors saved food, the mouth that fed upon them would, when the still ceased working, fall upon the corn in some other shape, and that, then, the still would certainly be no "granary" against a time of scarcity. He was, ther-



fore driven to the other horn of the dilemma ; and I leave the reader to judge of the set of principles, which could lead this gentleman to conclude, that, in order to be provided against a year of scarcity, a certain portion of the produce of every common year must be thrown into the sea.—In answer to the narrow-viewed argument, that the *barley-farmer* would suffer greatly, I had said, that “the demand would regulate the production.” This Mr. Wakefield denies. He truly says, that this denial requires explanation, but, if I understand his explanation, it is by no means satisfactory. I said nothing about *bad* years or *good* years. I said, that, at all times, the demand would regulate the production, meaning, of course, upon an average of years. Is barley dearer than oats? A greater proportion of barley is sure to be sown the next year. Are oats dearer than barley (as is the case at present)? A similar effect is produced. Thus, the farmer is, and always will and must be, directed by the market; and thus there is, upon an average of years, sure to be a due proportion of every species of produce.—In another part of his letter, he supposes me incapable of forming a correct judgment upon this matter, because I am not a *practical farmer*; as if, in order to reason correctly upon the operations of self-interest, it were necessary to know how to manage an arable farm. But, I am told, that there are some lands, whereon barley is grown, that will not bear wheat. I noticed this before, and I said, that, if they would not bear wheat they would *always* bear oats, which may serve as an answer to Mr. Bell’s Messenger, who is very much alarmed at the prospect of destroying the *grass* which succeeds the barley, and which, it is well known, succeeds oats full as well as barley. Suppose, however, for argument’s sake, that there are some lands that will bear *no* corn but barley. It is a strange supposition; but, admit it for the sake of the argument. Let those perverse lands bear barley still, and let others, which now bear barley, and which are more accommodating in their nature, bear oats or wheat. If all Hampshire, for instance, were made up of the perverse lands, and all Surrey of the accommodating lands, I’ll warrant that the whole of the corn, when raised, would find its way very quickly to the precise spot where it was most wanted. It is nonsense, then; it is totally unworthy of a man of any mind to suffer himself to be led to dabble in such puddle-like arguments.—Let us now take one more view of Mr. Wakefield’s “*granary*” which is to arise from the *throwing away* of a certain

portion of the produce of every abundant, and even every common, year. “From the present state of the continent,” says, he, towards the close of this, his last, letter “we cannot import. This” (the corn thrown away through the distilleries) “is, therefore, our *only resource*. Take it away, and one of two things will follow, either this surplus quantity of food will no longer be grown, or a new population will arise to consume it; which ever happens the produce will not exceed the demand one fair year with another; and if, while we cannot import, we have neither an export to retain, nor a surplus luxurious consumption to convert into food, we are without resource, and exist at the *mercy of the seasons*.” This is the old argument, with the addition of the circumstance of a supposed increase of population as the consequence of an increase in the quantity of food.—But, let us examine a little more minutely into the effect of this supposed “granary.” Let us suppose a little nation growing a thousand quarters of corn annually, in fair years; that it contains a thousand people, and that each person eats annually a quarter of corn. Now, says Mr. Wakefield, I would have the nation, in fair years, raise an additional 500 quarters to throw away; so that, when a year of half-crop comes, each person should still have his quarter of corn. There may be difference in the degree, but the principle is the same.—This would, indeed, be setting the seasons at defiance; it would be to “take a bond of fate;” but, it would also be to set human nature at defiance; it would be to assume an absolute controul over physical and moral causes. Does Mr. Wakefield consider, that there would be labour required to produce the 500 quarters to be thrown away? Does he consider, that the land, for the purpose of raising these 500 quarters to be thrown away, would be worn bare?—The very worst effect that the opposers of the proposed measure anticipate, is a diminished produce. A diminished produce would surely be accompanied with a *rest* in the land; and *rested* is land enriched; and land enriched ready for the plough is the best possible resource. One year of short crop never yet was greatly distressing in this kingdom; it cannot, from the nature of things, be so; and, if there are rested fields always ready for the plough, there can be only one year of short crop at a time. It will, therefore, I think, be found, after all, that the only resource safely to be relied on, the only granary against a time of scarcity, lies in the bosom of the earth, and in that foresight, that intuitive wisdom, which

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teaches the owners of corn to be slow in the supply, and the consumers to be sparing in the consumption.—If the 500 waste quarters, of the above-described little nation, compel the nation to use *all their land* (and this is what Mr. Wakefield wishes to see), the consequence will be, that there will be no *reserve manure*, no *rest* in the land, no *store* of the means of production; and, of course, no means of making up for any deficiency that may, from whatever cause, arise.—In adverting now, by way of conclusion, more immediately to the measure proposed, I cannot refrain from again observing upon the apathy of the land-owners and the farmers while such a large importation was going on. If the West India planters had 300,000 quarters of corn to import, it would have required a good stock of assurance in any land-owner, or farmer, to have objected to the importation. Where, then, is the difference to them, whether the thing come in the shape of corn, or in the shape of sugar?—Since I began writing this article, that is to say, since yesterday, I have received a letter upon the subject from a gentleman of this county, who appears to be well acquainted with all its details. I insert his letter immediately after that of Mr. Wakefield, and, I am persuaded, that it cannot fail to produce an effect favourable to the measure proposed. Another gentleman thanks me for my address to the Freeholders, and says, that he is certain, that if the county were polled, there would be a majority in its favour of fifty to one. Another says, “nothing but the worst sort of selfishness, guided by extreme folly, could have suggested an opposition to a measure so obviously calculated to guard us against the dangers of scarcity without lessening the produce of the taxes.” A fourth, for whose opinion I have the highest respect, says that he perfectly agrees with me; and a fifth offers me, in case of another county election, his cordial support, if I choose to become a candidate; “for,” says he, “in this one address, you have done more service to the country than I recollect any other man to have done it.” As a mark of this gentleman’s approbation, which any man might be proud of, I receive his offer with thanks, while I assure him that my ambition does not lie that way; and, as a proof that my sentiments, upon this important subject, accord with his and with those of the other gentlemen, whom he names, I confess myself to have been highly gratified by the contents of his letter, which, had he not expressed his wishes to the contrary, I should certainly

have made public.—He asks, and well he may, “with what face the late ministers can oppose the intended bill?” With them the measure did, in fact, originate. They proposed, it is true, only to *permit* sugar to participate with corn in the distilleries; but, the principle is the same; for, either some sugar would have been used, or none. If none, then the measure would have been nugatory; if some, then, whatever was used would have thrown so much corn back upon the people to be consumed in food. I was, therefore, utterly astonished to see, that Mr. Windham, who, in general, reasons so correctly, had spoken as if he intended to oppose the bill, which opposition, supposing him to have approved of the proposition made while he was a minister, cannot be considered in any other light than that of *factions*.—The West Indians and their interests, though I think their interests as much entitled to attention as those of any other class of people, I leave entirely out of the question. I am contending for the general interests of England only; and, what a monstrous thing it is to hear the farmer (with the land-owner at his back) say, let me have a *high price* for my corn; distil it; export it; throw it away; no matter what you do with it, so that it brings me a *high price*. There are, says he, hundreds of hogsheads of sugar, which are spoiling in the king’s warehouses; these, employed in the distilleries, would cause a saving of corn; but, such a use of them would *lower the price of my corn*, and, therefore, the man who proposes such a measure is an *enemy to the country*! Any assertion requiring so much assurance never, surely, was before heard of in the world.

SIR HOME POPHAM.—The reader will have born in mind, that, in the early part of the present session of parliament, Sir Francis Burdett having brought forward the subject of *Admiralty Drofts*, it was asserted, by the ministers and their partizans, that all the money which, in this way, fell under the power of the Crown, was disposed of for the *public good*; and, it was particularly mentioned, that a very liberal share was, in all cases, granted by the Crown to the captors. In order to show, that this was not the fact, and that the money was, some times, at least, disposed of in an improper manner, Mr. LUSHINGTON stated the instance of Sir HOME POPHAM, who received from the government £20,000, great part of the worth of a ship and cargo, which had been taken from his people by one of our cruisers, and which, as being engaged in a smuggling trade to the East Indies, had been condemned in



the Admiralty court.—Some explanation was attempted; but, the impression which Mr. Lushington's speech produced was by no means removed by any thing that was said on the other side. Sir Home Popham was present, and, though possessed of good talents and not deficient in boldness, he appeared, from the report of the debate, to make but a very poor apology for the grant that had been made to him, to say nothing about the extraordinary circumstances, which had led to the condemnation of the vessel and cargo, both of which he had claimed as his property.—The discussion was postponed, until certain papers, relative to the transaction, and which papers were then moved for, could be produced. These papers are now before the House of Commons, and the discussion will, I should suppose, take place in a few days.—The out-lines of the story are as follow: in 1786, Sir Home Popham, who was then Mr. Popham and a Lieutenant in the navy, upon half pay, obtained leave from the Lords of the Admiralty to go to a Danish settlement, or factory, in the East Indies, for the purpose, as he stated, and still states, of gaining experience in his profession.—Instead of a Danish settlement in the East Indies, however, he went to Ostend, where he formed a trading connection, and thence he proceeded to the East Indies. The several ships he was in, and the numerous means made use of by him and his associates for the purpose of prosecuting their trade, it would be too tedious to enumerate here, and would, besides, be unfair, until the discussion be past.—In 1793, Mr. Popham, after having carried on a pretty constant trade between the East Indies and other parts of the world, returned to Europe; and, having put into Cruxhaven bay, in Ireland, was captured by the ship *Diadem*, upon the ground of being engaged in an illicit trade. From the *Diadem* he, by the means stated in the papers, got released. He then bore away for Ostend; but, on his way, came to off Hastings, where he landed a quantity of tea and of rhubarb. Proceeding on his voyage he was, however, captured by Capt. Mark Robinson, in what ship I do not now recollect. Mr. Popham left the ship and went to Ostend; but, when the ship and cargo were demanded, as good prize, by the captors, he put in his claim as proprietor of both, and asserted, that the trade, in which he had been engaged, was not illicit, and ought not to subject him to forfeiture.—The question, together with other questions growing out of it, took ten years to decide; but, in 1803, both ship

and cargo were condemned to the Crown.—Captain Robinson, in the prosecution of his claim, had now expended about £6000, which, of course, he had been compelled to advance, from time to time, during the ten years that the litigation lasted. Both parties applied to the Lords of the Treasury. Capt. Robinson, as captor, for a grant of the proceeds of the ship and cargo, and Mr. Popham, as owner, for the same proceeds. The expences of the law proceedings, incurred by the captors, are, in cases where the forfeiture is to the Crown, always first defrayed; but, it appears, that Captain Robinson did not obtain even a reimbursement for the whole of his expences, and, in quality of captor, not one single farthing; while Mr. Popham, now become Sir Home Popham (having been knighted by the Emperor Paul of Russia), obtained all the rest of the proceeds of ship and cargo, amounting to the sum of £20,000, or thereabouts.—But, there is something well worthy of notice, as to the time, when this grant was obtained.—A report upon the case was made by the king's proctor, in 1803; but, no grant then, when Mr. Addington was in power, took place. The matter lay dormant, until 1805, when Pitt and Lord Melville again got the ascendancy; and then, upon the same report, the grant was made, Sir Home Popham having, as the public cannot fail to remember, made himself very conspicuous as an opponent of Lord St. Vincent and the Addington administration.—Capt. Robinson, though he was of, probably, twenty years standing in the service, at the time the capture was made, and though he was remarkable, even in the English navy, for zeal, skill, and bravery, and whose father before him had lost a leg in the same service, in which he died an admiral; this gentleman has never since been able to get employed in the navy, and has thus lost the expected fruits of a life of honourable endeavours in the service of his country, while Sir Home Popham has, in repeated instances, been preferred to all others of the same rank in his profession.—When I saw a *party* attack upon Sir Home Popham, when I saw a court-martial organized, in so unusual a manner, for his trial, I felt a strong bias in his favour, especially as I perceived the ministers so shy in defending the attacks that were pointed against him. I thought, that a prejudice existed against him, in the service, on account of his superior skill and activity; and, I regarded it as extremely base, in the ministers, to sacrifice him to that prejudice. But, the facts, which Mr. Lushington has brought to light, have,

in this respect now perceive the loss of the holding of the most people of the captain of the expedition.—induce any of The discussion must very soon man will be All that I have while, is to the portance of for an attempt and done. extremely h will agree ether should justice.

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in this respect, changed my opinion. I can now perceive a sufficient reason for the shyness of the ministers, and for their withholding of those marks of distinction, which most people expected to see bestowed upon the captain of the fleet sent on the Danish expedition.—Nevertheless, I wish not to induce any one to prejudge the question. The discussion, the exposure of all the facts, must very soon take place, and then every man will be able to form his own judgment. All that I have a desire to do, in the meanwhile, is to apprize my readers of the importance of the subject, and to prepare them for an attentive observation as to what is said and done. The case of Capt. Robinson is extremely hard, and, I think, most persons will agree with me, that some means or other should be adopted for doing him justice.

When I said, last week, that *Mr. Scott's* letter had been witholden from publication by me, at the request of Lord Oxford, I should have observed, that the reasons, which his lordship gave for the request, were not at all connected with a wish to keep from the public an account of any part of the conduct of himself or any one of his family or friends.—Since last week, I have had an opportunity of hearing more about the whole matter than I had before heard; and, I think it right to say, that, if what I have now heard, be true (of which I have no doubt), I was, before, grossly deceived.

The intelligence from *America* will, of course, be a subject for the next Register, not forgetting the observations of the Morning Chronicle upon the excellent letter of Mr. PICKERING, who is one of the very best men in that country, and who was long the secretary of state under General Washington and Mr. Adams.

*Belley, 28th April, 1808.*

## COBBETT'S Parliamentary History

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### MR. WAKEFIELD'S 4TH. LETTER.

SIR,—I also rejoice that the important questions, which are the subject of my correspondence with you, have "nothing to do with party;" and it is for this reason that the opposition to the relief proposed to be given to the West Indian planters, merits the more serious consideration. The alarm which has gone forth is general, I apprehend it to be just, you think it is unfounded, you think this measure will not produce the slightest danger or injury to the mother country, either temporary or permanent. I feel a reluctant conviction of the contrary, I view it as bad in principle, and destructive in effect. I say I do so with reluctance, because I am aware of the distressed condition of the West Indian planter, and I should be unwilling to refuse him a boon which he flatters himself will relieve his difficulties, could it be granted without great and lasting injury to the British empire.—As to the distinction between barley growers, and wheat growers, it is one in words, not in substance, and which I join you in disregarding. In order to meet the question fairly, I will divide it into three parts. 1st. As it affects the two immediate parties to the question; namely, the West Indian planters and their agents on the one hand; the British landed and farming interests on the other. 2dly. As it is likely to affect the revenue. 3dly. As it will affect the interests and prosperity of the empire; which last is the branch of the subject which presses most upon my mind, and which all parties, the supporters and the opposers of the measure, equally join in acknowledging to be of paramount consideration and importance.—The first question is rather one of justice than of policy. There are two classes or descriptions of producers, the sugar growers



and the corn growers; and in the mother country there exists a large but limited market for the produce of either of them, they both lay claim to the possessions and advantages of this market, which of them then is best entitled to it? If a length of possession amounting almost to prescription should give a title, *that* the British farmer has, and upon the faith of it he has engaged his capital, his habits, and his hopes in agricultural enterprise. Further, the market is in the mother country, in that country with which the farmer's interest, his very existence even, is identified, to *all* the taxes of which he contributes, and to the defence of which he is fixed. It is a market also created by the consumption of himself and connections.—What then, is the claim of the planter? Upon the prospect of this market, he has *never* been induced to invest his property in colonial adventure, and in no degree has he created it.—If, then, justice only is to be considered, the title of the farmer is to be preferred; but, here the planter puts in his claim upon other ground, he has recourse to the aid of those duties, which are said by ethical writers to be of imperfect obligation, and that which he cannot claim of right, he hopes to obtain from our compassion, he pleads “distress.” Is it temporary? Or, is it permanent? If temporary, relieve him by a parliamentary grant; if permanent, by bounties enable him to sell his coffee and his sugar so cheap that the mass of the people may drink coffee in the room of tea, at present coffee is a luxury only occasionally consumed by the middle, and never tasted by the lower classes of the community; for by the same absurd policy which had misled the country into an encouragement of the foreign farmer at the expence of the British corn grower, we have been encouraging the tea cultivation of China, in room of promoting the prosperity of our own colonies, by opening to them a large and profitable market. When the current of consumption shall be turned from tea in favour of coffee the bounty may with safety be gradually withdrawn, and even a duty levied, if those on tea are at the same time advanced in proportion. Still more absurd than this, however, is the admission of French brandies to jostle and drive West Indian rum from the spirit market. Why not prohibit the importation of brandy altogether? That this is possible, I will undertake to show, should it ever be in serious contemplation.—These measures I should think would be wiser policy, and more just, than to relieve the planter at the expence, and contrary to the rights of the farmer.—But you seem to put the

question of justice wholly aside, and to consider that of interest alone, placing the profit of the farmer in opposition to the distress of the planter; and in your mode of doing so, it does appear to me, that you do not meet the question fairly, for the distress of the planter is relative not positive; yet, you say, that supposing the injury apprehended by the farmer to be realized, still it would be with you “a question of degree” or comparison “merely,” that you would only inquire “whether the injury to the barley growers would be more or less than the relief to the sugar growers.” Surely, this is a strange argument, why should the British farmers be the only class selected for bearing the burthen of relieving the distress of the planter! If the planter needs, and is intitled to relief, (which I by no means deny) let the *whole* nation equally contribute towards it. The injury to the farming interest is both larger and more extensive than you seem aware. Barley is a grain consumed either as the food of hogs, &c. or in the manufacture of spirits and beer; but whether consumed in the one way or the other, depends entirely upon its quality, and so different is both the quality and the price, that it is almost similar to speaking of two distinct species of grain. When we speak of hog barley, and barley of prime quality, the latter is either purchased by the distilleries, or by the maltsters. Now, maltsters are a set of men of small capitals (many without any) who engage in malting on the speculation of credit from the factor on the one hand, and the excise for the duty on the other; and when he fails the excise sweeps away every thing by an extent, leaving the factor without any dividend on his debt. The distiller on the contrary, is at once a large buyer, and a sure payer. Take then from the farmer the custom of the distiller, and you do him or his factor a treble injury, you lessen the demand for his produce, you deprive him of the competition which exists between the two classes or descriptions of his customers, and you not only leave him at the mercy of the maltsters for the *price* of his barley, but you confine him to sell to a customer always uncertain in his payments, and often insolvent. In addition however to this loss, the peculiar state of the barley market requires consideration. You triumphantly dwell on the distilleries consuming only 300,000 qrs. of English barley, it is obvious that the market, the existence of which would be scarcely felt if supplied equally from all parts of the kingdom, would be of the first importance if the supply came only from a confined district; the subtraction of such a market would

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be ruin to the particular district; now apply this obvious principle to the state of the barley market, the price of barley throughout the kingdom is regulated by the price at Mark Lane; and, it is a fact, that these 300,000 qrs. are nearly all sold there; it is not, therefore, the subtraction of 300,000 qrs. from the demand upon all the barley growers throughout the island, but it is the subtraction of 300,000 qrs. from the single limited and particular market of Mark Lane, the price of which, regulating the price of the rest of the kingdom, will cause the effect of taking away the consumption of the distilleries, to be felt all through the country to an extent of which you do not seem apprised. Had you ever been a practical farmer, you would never have said that "the kind as well as the amount of the produce will be regulated by the demand." This is the great and destructive error into which so many have fallen upon this subject, as relating to the farmers profit, demand can only vary the kind of his produce at the expence of the routine of his crops; and converting the order of his farm into confusion. If the routine of any course of cropping is to be interfered with, if any class of owners of land are to be told by the legislature, with what they shall cultivate their estates, the planter may as well be directed to change the object of his cultivation as the farmer. I do not suppose that any one will contend, that nothing but sugar can be grown in the West Indies. Though sugar may have been the most profitable crop, and indeed, when it is recollected that the planter is the complainant, surely this would be more equitable. And now, Sir, I will direct your attention to the way this proposed measure will affect the revenue of the country. While doing so, I shall in one instance, be under the necessity of adverting to my first head, and in this place to notice the loss which will be incurred by the distiller. As the distillery is at present conducted, it requires a very large capital to be invested in what is termed "the plant," which is buildings, utensils, and machinery. The plant of the distiller occupies by far the greater portion of his capital; but, if the legislature compels him to distil from sugar instead of grain, the consequence will be that the chief of this capital will become useless to him, for the sugar distillation may be carried on in almost any metal pot. Indeed, to use a very forcible expression which I heard from a large distiller lately, "every porridge-pot will be converted into a temporary still." Now, what will be the consequence of this to the distiller? It will have the effect of destroying

the value of his plant, and worse than that of destroying his trade altogether. The capital at present required to adventure in a distillery is very large, and the trade is, therefore, in few hands; but if sugar is to be used in the still, scarcely any capital will be required, and rivalry will reduce the profits to a bare subsistence. Is this however all? No, we have not yet viewed but the beginning of the injury, the facility given to distilling will invite, absolutely invite the needy and the unprincipled to *illicit distillation*. Hence the ruin of the honest, lawful distiller, and an immense defalcation of the revenue. If, however, this measure be meant to include Ireland, the effect will be yet more glaring, and if it be *not*, then the relief to the planter will be *trifling*. Such is the state of the Irish distillery, and such the state of society there; that it is morally impossible to introduce this measure in the sister kingdom, unless you can first persuade the people to approve of it; the illicit distillation in Ireland is encouraged by the minority of that kingdom, in order to find a sale for their barlies, which are a more profitable crop to the Irish farmer than oats. If this is the case, when there is only a competition between the profit of one crop and another, we may well expect yet further opposition and evasion, when an attempt is made to deprive them of the market for their crop altogether. By the laws of Ireland, the revenue officer who discovers and seizes a private still, has a reward of ten pounds paid him by the government, and he receives a fine of fifty pounds from the parish in which the still is found. The law requires a certain portion of oats to be used in the distillation of whiskey, and the people of Ireland have taken a general aversion to whiskey drawn from oats. A tin still is in common use through that country, which costs but two guineas, and is worn out in about ten days. By the collusion between the illicit distiller, and the revenue officer, the still is scarcely ever seized till nearly worn out; and many instances have been discovered, where the reward has been shared between the owner and the officer. But, if this is already the case with the distillation from grain, what may not be expected if sugar be introduced; and if this should become the practice here, to what will our immense revenue from spirits be reduced? Why almost to a name—At length, Sir, I arrive at the third and last division of the subject; and have to inquire how the interest of the empire will be affected by the measure? I thank you for the idea of the corn used in the distilleries and breweries.



being "thrown away." For if every species of agricultural produce convertible into food, which is consumed as a luxury, is to be considered as "thrown away," I accept of the term, and in this sense of it contend, that in order to secure the country from the danger and suffering of a scarcity, it is necessary either to *thus* annually "throw away" a large quantity of grain, or that we should export to such an extent. Deprive us of the export (whether by impolitic laws or the state of the political world, it matters not) and we must have recourse to the luxurious consumption of grain to secure us from the evils I apprehend. The fallacy upon which you have built your argument, in supposing me to contend "that in order to induce the farmers of a nation to grow more corn than is upon an average necessary for the consumption of the nation, a part of what they grow must be annually bought of them for the purpose of being thrown away." Now this, Sir, is not my proposition, I contend, that for a course of years we have not grown corn equal to our consumption; and I contend contrary to your statement, "that demand does not regulate the production of provisions." But this will require explanation. Let a country in consequence of the demand, grow one *fair* year with another, to the amount of its physical wants, and have neither export or luxurious consumption to the extent of this growth. Demand will regulate production and no further. For suppose a bad harvest, the demand is the same; but all the demand in the world will not make good the deficiency of the crop. And your fallacy consists in putting the chance of a bad year out of the question, now this chance should be *in* the question; it should be *present* to our view, we should *never* lose sight of it. It is the *hinge* upon which the argument turns. Instead, therefore, of the alarm being at approaching superabundance of corn, the real alarm which is felt by the country is, that the measure will deprive us of that resource, which in the day of famine and distress (greater far than that of the West Indian planter) will save us, or at least a large portion of the people from starving. For, Sir, from the present state of the continent we cannot import. This, therefore, is our *only* resource, we have no other, take it away, and the first week of autumn will give the nation dreadful experience of the truth of the arguments I am submitting to you. One of two things must follow the adoption of this measure of distilling wholly from sugar. Either this surplus quantity of corn will no longer be grown, or a new population will arise to consume it; which ever

happens the produce will not exceed the demand one *fair* year with another; and while we cannot import, if we have neither an export to retain, nor a surplus luxurious consumption to convert into food, we are without resource, and exist at the *mercy of the seasons*. Your idea of the West Indies becoming a market for the export of barley in the shape of pork, is not, I think, tenable; for if the planter has the least shadow of a claim to be relieved from the distress which he now suffers, he surely will have a *real* one not to be starved. Change the present order of things according to your proposal, with a view to relieve the *money distress* of the planter, and then on the first scarcity, will you deprive him of his supply of provisions, that supply upon which his very existence depends; this would be affording present aid at the expence of future destruction.—Fully agreeing with you and Mr. Malthus, that "population treads close upon the heels of production," I mean of that production which is consumed as food, I have ever felt anxious to encourage a distribution of some part of such production into channels of luxury, as thereby a demand is created, and a surplus produce gained, which is available at the moment of necessity, and till that perilous moment arrives, the tariff (if I may so express myself) of human life, is more high, a greater enjoyment is afforded to the people, and the public prosperity is advanced. Turn however this surplus production into food, population quickly follows; the condition of the people is not bettered, they are exposed to all the chances of bad seasons, and none of the ends of government are obtained; for I shall ever agree with the proposition, that "where a country is so extended and populous, that it can maintain its independence, and secure its prosperity; the further extension of its territory, and the increase of its population become secondary to the moral improvement and individual happiness of its inhabitants."—For my opinions concerning inclosures, I must refer you to my last letter, and shall subsequently enlarge upon the subject; but the length at which I have replied to your observations upon my correspondence with you, oblige me to postpone both that, and the consideration of the corn laws, which I promised.—I am, Sir, &c.—EDWARD WAKEFIELD.—*Duke Street, Westminster, April 25, 1808.*

## CORN AGAINST SUGAR.

SIR,—As one of the class whom you have addressed in the provincial and London papers, I am desirous to thank you for devoting a part of your attention, and of

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your last weekly sheet, to the question of substituting Sugar for Corn. I am willing to believe that the opposition of many to such substitution, is owing to their want of opportunity to learn, and rightly to understand, the chief circumstances, connected with the case; which (as far as they are of a practical nature) is not to be wondered at. It is well known to those who are the most concerned in the comparison, that a quarter of well made pale malt will afford as much vinous spirit as 1 cwt. 3 qr. or 196 lb. of good, and strong sugar. While raw, or unmalted, barley is no more than half as productive as the malt. Of the 300,000 quarters of barley consumed, annually, in the British distilleries 250,000 are malted, and 50,000 are used in a raw state. Hence, the quantity of sugar required to supply the use of 250,000 quarters of malt will be 437,500 cwt. and the substitute for 50,000 quarters of barley will be 43,750, the total whereof is 481,250 cwt. or 40,104 hogsheads. The accumulated surplus of sugar in three years, (being the difference between the importations and the sales from the 1st January, 1804 to the 1st January, 1807) amounted, according to the parliamentary reports, to 1,434,609 cwt. which may be reckoned a supply for the distilleries for the three years, being 119,634 hogsheads of 12 cwt. each.—This immense glut of sugar remained wholly useless, under locks in the king's warehouses in London or in the out ports, *because there was no demand for any part of it.* Consequently, the duties thereon, amounting to 2 millions sterling, were lost, to the revenue; and all the actual costs of the cultivation, and various expences in the plantations, with the freight and shipping charges to England, exceeding all together a further sum of £2,500,000 were lost in the same time, to the West-Indian proprietors—With what face can the country gentlemen require that these two amounts of £4,500,000 or 1,500,000 annually should be so sunk and surrendered, and for what purpose? The average annual growth of barley, in this kingdom was, 20 years ago, estimated to be 3,500,000 quarters. There is more reason to think the quantity grown is increased than that it is diminished, within this period. And if such should be the case to the amount of 100,000 quarters only, yearly, it will follow, that the whole consumption, by the distillers, is no more than a twelfth part of the annual produce of this grain. What room, therefore, is there for alarm to the landed interest? The same quantity of

barley would, doubtless, still be malted; because, in all probability, the consumption of beer would be somewhat increased. The distillers, it is true, would be under the necessity to advance the prices of their spirits. But, if the cost of such liquors was to be increased in a degree to lessen their consumption, would not this tend to national amendment? Would not the same money be expended in, and the same amount of duties (taken altogether) be paid for, a far more wholesome, because more nutritious, article?—It appears from the accounts at the Excise Office, that 3,250,000 quarters of barley are malted annually, on the average. The remainder of the growth (2, or 350,000) is required for seed, and the feeding of cattle. In some parts of the kingdom bread is, also, made with barley. Of the 3,250,000 quarters of malt, the common brewers use 2,250,000, or nine times as much as the distillers, and it would not be difficult to select a very few (say six) of the principal breweries in London, wherein as much malt is consumed, as in *all* the distilleries in the kingdom.—After all, I have no expectation that the measure will pass into a law. It is too late in the season for the substitution to have any effect, either way. The distillers are provided with large stocks; and should such an act, even, be assented to in the present session, it could be of no value; because there is reason to believe that, to make it passable, a clause would be introduced, empowering the privy council to stop the operation of the act, whenever it may be judged by them to be necessary. And every one must perceive how easily a plea may be found by the ministers, for the exercise of this power, as soon as the harvest is gathered. Whatever, however, may be the event in the matter, that can be said in excuse for the gross folly and injustice of those who, at the present momentous crisis, advocate in favour of an high price for corn; who have the assurance to recommend the throwing it away in the fabrication of an article, allowedly destructive of the health, and every way productive of distress to the chief consumers of this pernicious liquor; instead of promoting the application of the same corn to their necessary food?—I am, &c.—A HAMPSHIRE FREEHOLDER.—*April 27, 1808.*

#### CORN AGAINST SUGAR.

SIR;—I have read your letter to the Freeholders of Hampshire, as well as some papers in your Register, on the subject of introducing sugar instead of grain, into the



Distilleries, with very great satisfaction, as they appear to me to contain undeniable truths. But in your statement of the annual importation of grain from the Continent of Europe, for a long series of years back, I think you are rather below the mark, when you make the average only 800,000 quarters, as I have been informed it has amounted to between 12 and 1400,000; however, whatever the quantity may be, we must now consider it out of the market, as we can receive no more from that quarter; and as the annual importation of grain shows very plainly that there is not as much corn grown in this country as is equal to our consumption, there will be a deficiency in the market equal to the amount of the importation. Now, Sir, we all know that the scarcity of any article at market will enhance the price of it, as a glut will reduce it. Is it not, therefore, very plain, that the deficiency I have mentioned must raise the price of corn, and if we should have war with America, the West Indies must be supplied with food from this country, which would increase the deficiency and raise the price still higher. If, therefore, the information which I have received be correct, that 1,200,000 quarters have annually been imported, and we add to that 300,000 more for the supply of the West Indies, it will produce a diminution of the quantity of corn in the market of 1,500,000 quarters; and if you take from the distilleries and throw into the market the quantity they use of 300,000 quarters, still there will be a deficiency of 1,200,000. Now, Mr. Cobbett, the question of real concern to the country ought to be, not whether we shall take the pitiful quantity used by the distilleries and throw into the market, but how so large a deficiency is to be made up? and that appears to me to be a question of every serious import under the present political circumstances of the times. For if after thirty years (for I am told we have been importing corn for so long a period) trial, it has been found, that we do not grow as much corn as we consume, (otherwise the importation would have ceased) our prospect of encreasing our produce so as to be equal to our consumption is rather gloomy; and at any rate, as seed time is now past, we can look for no increase of produce for the present year. I was therefore astonished to find, by your letter to the Freeholders of Hampshire, that such a thing as a Petition against bringing into the market the trifling quantity of grain used in the distilleries, was likely to be set on foot; and I wish you may be right when, treating on this subject, you state in

your Register: "I do not recollect any measure to have been met by so apparently determined an opposition as this; and, though I am not on the side of the opposers, it does, I must confess, give me some little relief from that disgust which I have of late experienced, to perceive that this opposition has nothing to do with party," because I had imagined that there was not a farmer in Hampshire or any where else, but who would have been satisfied with the rise of price which the deficiency of corn in the market that I have stated, must necessarily produce, without the addition of the trifle that would arise to him from the quantity used in the distilleries, if left to himself, and not urged on by others possessing a factious or party spirit.—It has been alleged, that the distillation of grain ought to be encouraged as a measure stimulating the farmer to sow more lands, and a granary to be made use of in case of need. As to the first, let us first of all be convinced that this country can produce as much corn as the population can consume in food (which an experience of 30 years has not been able to do) before we throw away any part of it in making of spirits, which can be made as good, if not better, from sugar, of which we have an overflowing quantity at market; and as to the second, we are precisely in the predicament, when they allow that the grain in the distilleries is to be brought into the market for food, namely, when a scarcity demands it; which, I think, is very apparently our case at present. I have only one more question to ask you, Mr. Cobbett, when I will not trouble you further at present, and that is, besides the deficiency of grain already mentioned, if there should happen a blight or other injury to the crop now on the ground, where are we to look for a supply of food? or must this country be reduced to a state of famine?—*PRO-PATRIA.*—April 28, 1808.

#### AMERICAN STATES.

Believe me, Mr. Cobbett, it is not without reluctance, I again press myself forward as a correspondent of yours. I do assure you, I would not have attempted a reply to the first letter of the "American Merchant of New Broad Street," had I not considered myself in possession of *irresistable* facts, to prove the fallacy of his statements. I say, Sir, I would not *otherwise* have attempted a reply, because I know, and knowing it, will confess, my incapacity to carry on a lettered warfare, where ingenuity of argument is to be the foundation stone—this I candidly admit, but I must in the same breath declare,

that when I read your proof, no eloquence, no rhetoric, no mere words from ends of the earth, no written censures, no opinion, no of the dignity of England.—If feelings of this kind second let p. 610.) in actuate him from my very it is some reason to disclaim with felt, those notions, judging glaringly against the invidious to insinuate, judice, were you, he comes towards his duces, a for liberty of Sir, that I might as Gos freedom, the words "been granted" and virtue let me add that I should vindicate, the office of those their effect Emperor of power to insulted d which, hurt feelings, lengthened dependent now respect to the year 1 speaking of tioned, the dual knowledge under-written evidence premiums the Berlin several n appeared mons, and tice, that my advanced consequence were a triumph



that *when* I really think myself armed with proof, no eloquence, however powerful, no rhetoric, however admirable, shall deter me from endeavouring to rescue from unmerited censure, those measures, which, in my opinion, are adopted for the preservation of the dignity, and the independance of England.—If I have really wounded the feelings of the “American merchant” (see his second letter as inserted in your Register p. 610.) in mistaking the principles which actuate him, positively, and truly, I do, from my very heart, beg his pardon, because, it is some relief to my mind, to find him disclaim with worthy indignation, *if actually felt*, those motives, which did in my opinion, *judging from his line of argument, glaringly* appear to *biass* him. Forgetting the *invidious* manner in which *he attempted* to insinuate, that personal hatred, and prejudice, were the incentives, that actuated *you*, he complains of *my* style of language, towards *him*, and then dexterously introduces, a forcible appeal, with respect to the liberty of the British press. God forbid, Sir, that I should attempt to tread, even as light as Gossamer, on that palladium of our freedom, that ancient fabric, which to use the words of an eminent advocate, “has been gradually reared, by the wisdom, and virtue, of our forefathers,” but, Sir, let me add, honor and patriotism forbid, that I should not strive with *honest* zeal, to vindicate, from misrepresentation, the justice of those measures, which *already*, in their effect, begin to make the haughty Emperor of France *feel*, that England yet has power to protect, her already too much insulted dignity. Pardon this digression, which, hurried on by the warmth of my feelings, I fear I may have too much lengthened.—I observe that your correspondent now acknowledges his error, with respect to premiums of insurance, through the year 1807. In my former letter, when speaking on this immediate subject, I mentioned, that independant of my own individual knowledge, I could produce leading under-writers in Lloyd’s Coffee-House, as evidence to the truth of my assertion, that premiums did advance in consequence of the Berlin decree. I have since learnt, that several most respectable gentlemen, have appeared at the bar of the House of Commons, and proved the fact. I likewise notice, that your correspondent does not doubt my assertion, as to premiums having advanced 100 per cent. in America, also in consequence of the same decree. If it were a principle of mine to dwell on my triumph over a fallen antagonist, here, Sir,

what an opportunity do I possess. I must not omit to acknowledge my error as to the period, when the Berlin decree was first known in this country, but at the same time, I put it to you, and every impartial man, whether this error, does, in the most distant manner, shake my assertion, as to premiums having advanced in consequence of the said decree?—The questions put to Buonaparté, by the President of the Court of Prize Causes, your correspondent calls *insidious*—What! the President dare to put insidious questions to his master? Oh, no, impossible.—Insidious, however, or not insidious, we heard of them in this country very early in the month of October. Your correspondent after conjecturing as to the probable period of their being known here, says, “but I cannot speak with absolute certainty to this point; the material thing is, that our Orders in Council were issued, before it was possible to know, whether America would protest against the enforcement of the Berlin decree, or not.” What! Sir; did not America virtually submit to the decree, by quietly paying for about two months, without any public remonstrance or protest whatever, on the part of the government, an advance of 100 per cent. in the premiums of insurance on voyages direct to England and Ireland? surely, nothing can be more palpably clear.—The extracts of letters I produced, to prove the execution of the Berlin decree, your correspondent says, only speak in general terms without naming place or ship; this is not quite fair; they expressly say, the Berlin decree had been positively acted upon at Antwerp; it is true, they do not give the name of the vessel mentioned, to have been cast away on the coast of France, and condemned; but when I state, on my solemn word of honor, that these extracts were taken from the letters of one of the most respectable merchants on the Continent, and who certainly would feel inclined to lessen, rather than to exaggerate the fact; I do confidently think that every impartial man, taking the context of the whole of the said extracts, will be of opinion, that the Berlin decree was acted upon, previous to the promulgation of the British Orders in Council.—I believe I have now noticed the leading observations, which the facts I adduced in my letter of 30th March, have drawn from the American merchant, and notwithstanding he has so ingeniously laboured to contradict them, I do maintain that they still stand firm and unshaken.—But a few words more Sir, and I take my final leave of your correspondent. He appears desirous to play on my expression of British



American merchant, by telling you that he really is an *English* American merchant, that he is much mistaken if I can make the same declaration. He is perfectly correct; I cannot designate myself an American merchant, but, I can assert, I am an *Englishman*, possessing a British heart, and British feelings, and it is that heart and those feelings, that have actuated me in repelling his accusations, as to the injustice of the British Orders in Council. Had I been born, either in Scotland, or Ireland, (the invidious contemptible distinction, I am forced to presume he means to make by using the word English) I can tell him, I should still have viewed his narrow-minded insinuation with the precise same sovereign disdain.—I am, &c. J.—  
*London, April 19, 1808.*

## IRISH TYTHES.

SIR.—In your Political Register of the 26th March, ult. I read with infinite pleasure a letter dated Dublin, ascribing to rack rents, and the neglect of and extortion committed by landlords on their tenants, the past and present miseries of this country; be *confidently assured* the writer has stated the fact fairly, and that the exceptions to his charge against our Irish squires are so few, as to leave this a general political truth, more capable of ascertainment, and more obvious to an impartial observer, than perhaps, any afforded by the annals of any country, as the cause of discontent and disloyalty. Our poor join their landlords and squires in their outcry against tythes, very naturally; these tythes are in addition to rack rents, and the poor flatter themselves they have found a weak point of attack, and that in all events, by the abolition of tythes much is gained. So far, I concur, and (limiting my reasoning on the tythe system) to the effect it has on the poor, sincerely wish they were abolished, and the clergy of all persuasions paid by the state. But, to say that tythes are the cause of the poverty, the heart breaking poverty, of the Irish cottager, is an absurdity too gross, a falsehood too stupid for the most violent and ignorant of our squires to shew his face to. Not one estated man in Ireland, in one hundred, has any just sense of the implied duty imposed on him as proprietor of land. He looks merely to the number of pounds, shillings, and pence he can extract from his tenantry; he requires neither good farm houses, timber, fencing or draining. Land contiguous to Dublin, is let at 20 guineas per acre, near most paltry towns from 8

to 12, and all over this unfortunate island, in proportion. The lands of our numerous absentees are let at the most destructively high rents, because they are let by an agent or attorney, who is valued and paid by his employer accordingly, and who makes what representations he pleases. No man ever hears in society, an estated gentleman say, "by such or such an event, my estate will be improved, my tenants made comfortable." No! but, "I shall have such or such a rise, my estate *will* be worth so much more, &c."

—These facts are disgustingly true and prominent to every human being who is not interested in denying them. I therefore, draw your attention to this most embarrassing political subject, not more on account of its importance than of its difficulty (a legislative interference being nearly impracticable), in the hope that your mind and some of your labours, may be directed towards it, and that it may become the subject of discussion in your Register, and set our fellow subjects in Great Britain to think, and reason, and communicate on this, the real state of Ireland, as deeply connected, nay, embracing their own prosperity and existence. Do not, I implore of you, Sir, and your correspondents, be led away from the consideration of this subject, by any the most distant idea or apprehension that you are mistaken in the fact. Build upon it, and be assured your foundation is good. Take this for granted; and apply your strong understanding and powers of representation, to draw to it the public attention, and to force our landed gentlemen to turn their views inward. If the fact be denied, thousands, tens of thousands will substantiate it, and the very investigation will lead to a beneficial result. I really think (without overrating the importance of my own country) no subject to which your attention in the course of your political life has been turned, is of more importance than this. You will necessarily among the enlightened and independent English find support and assistance, and gratitude and applause be your reward in—*IRELAND.*—*April 2, 1808.*

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